

Central Intelligence Agency



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## DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

22 October 1985

## THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE AND AFGHANISTAN

## SUMMARY

The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) is unlikely to contribute much more than impotent resolutions in support of the Afghan resistance. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, the two OIC members most concerned with Afghanistan, do not view the OIC as a significant or useful venue for the Afghan issue. Many of the Islamic states prefer to keep the issue on the back burner and not to antagonize Moscow. US ability to influence the OIC is limited because the organization associates Washington with Tel Aviv. Washington would have to work through Islamabad, Riyadh, and perhaps Cairo to influence the OIC on Afghanistan. [redacted]

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This paper was prepared by [redacted] Issues Branch, South Asia Division, Office of Near East and South Asian Analysis at the request of Michael Pillsbury, Department of Defense. Information as of 22 October 1985 was used in preparing this report. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, South Asia Division, [redacted]

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Since the inception of the Islamic Conference in 1971, the organization has been weak and mostly concerned with preserving a fragile consensus among its 44 members. Despite the OIC's charter that calls for "safeguarding the independence and national rights of all Muslim peoples," many controversial political topics, such as the role of the Soviets in Afghanistan or the Iran-Iraq war have tended to reveal conflicting interests and have resulted in relatively innocuous resolutions. In contrast, militant resolutions on the status of Jerusalem and the Palestinians find near unanimous support. [REDACTED]

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The OIC bureaucracy is small and not well equipped to provide material aid to Muslim guerrilla groups such as the Afghan Mujahideen. Secretary General Sharifuddin Pirzada, who was in President Zia's government, is not a forceful or innovative official and is not likely to advocate an Afghan policy that is out in front of Islamabad's plans. We do not believe the OIC's Islamic Development Bank --created to fund projects such as irrigation or municipal services-- will stretch its charter to aid the Mujahideen. The organization's Islamic News Agency might serve as a conduit for publishing more articles on the insurgents, provided that the Mujahideen establish a information arm. [REDACTED]

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An unwieldy group such as the OIC compares unfavorably with other international organizations such as ASEAN. ASEAN is a more geographically compact and politically cohesive group than the OIC and is better positioned to take action in the face of external aggression directed at one of its member states. [REDACTED]

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### Afghanistan

The OIC has displayed only limited concern for Afghanistan. In January 1980 the OIC suspended Afghanistan's membership and adopted a resolution that "strongly condemned Soviet military aggression against the Afghan people." By May 1980, the OIC Foreign Ministers Conference had softened its criticism to express only "deep concern over the perpetuation of Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan, and strongly reiterated the demand for the immediate, total, and unconditional withdrawal of all foreign troops from Afghanistan." The same language has been repeated in OIC Afghan resolutions since 1980. [REDACTED]

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In 1984, despite US demarches for a tougher condemnatory resolution and an impassioned speech attacking the USSR by a prominent Afghan Mujahideen figure, Islamabad offered no new language for the Afghan resolution, with the exception of a phrase critical of the bombing of Pakistani territory. The widely-publicized final communique of the Foreign Ministers Conference of last December called only for "further efforts to safeguard the independence of Afghanistan as a nonaligned Islamic state." The document did not mention the Soviet occupation. The final resolutions do mention

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the Soviets, but these were published months after the meeting and received scant attention. [redacted]

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### Key Players' Roles

Pakistan, which plays the major role in OIC consideration on Afghanistan, has not pushed for tougher language or other policy actions, [redacted] Islamabad, in our view, assesses that Arab delegations friendly to the USSR would successfully thwart any anti-Soviet effort. President Zia, faced with political divisions within Pakistan over the effectiveness of a hard line policy on Afghanistan and increasing Soviet pressure does not want to get too far out front on an anti-Soviet resolution. [redacted]

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Saudi Arabia and Egypt--the most influential Islamic nations in the OIC-- also seem reluctant to support a stronger Afghan resolution. The Saudis prefer a low public profile on Afghanistan. Egypt--whose suspension from the OIC was lifted only last year-- does not want to expend its limited political capital on Afghanistan. [redacted]

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### US Influence

US influence in the OIC is minimal. In last year's final communique, the US was condemned by name for its "hostile attitude towards the Palestinians," its continued support of the "Zionist enemy," its anti-Arab voting in the UN, and its military presence along Arab coasts. US friends and allies among the OIC membership remained silent during the debates. [redacted]

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### Outlook

The OIC is likely to give little more than lip service to Afghan affairs unless a key OIC member such as Pakistan or Saudi Arabia takes an active leadership role. Probably the best we can expect from the OIC is to continue to allow Afghan insurgent leaders address the annual foreign ministers meetings. Even with Pakistan and Saudi leadership other Arab and African members will drag their heels because of their own priorities. Even if the Mujahideen arrived on the OIC's doorstep with a unified delegation, we believe Muslim states with ties to Moscow would resist granting the Mujahideen formal observer or government-in-exile status. Other moderate OIC states such as Morocco or Sudan would have qualms about seating an anti-regime group for fear it would set precedent. [redacted]

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